



**Ambassador Lewis Lukens
Remarks
Security Sector Reform Workshop
Monday, October 15, 2012, 8:30 a.m.**

(As Prepared)

His Excellency, the Senegalese Minister of Armed Forces,
Acting Director and Academic Dean of the African Center for Strategic Studies in
Washington, DC,
Special Advisor to the U.S. Under Secretary of Defense for Policy at the
Pentagon,
Workshop Participants
Members of the Press,

Good morning. Yet again I find myself before a distinguished audience of U.S. and Senegalese officials jointly hosting a security-focused conference for the region of West Africa.

This is significant in that it shows the strength and solidarity of our partnership here. It is also significant because it demonstrates an increasing awareness, by the United States, by Senegal, and by other governments and partners in the region that security is a top priority for you.

We have in this room workshop participants from Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana, Guinea, Liberia, Niger, Nigeria, Sierra Leone and of course Senegal.

Some of your countries have in recent years come out of conflict. Some of your countries are dealing with current tension within your borders which risks destabilizing your entire nation and even the entire region. Others of you have had years or even decades of peace but want to ensure that it stays that way.

This workshop will give you the opportunity to discuss current security challenges in the participating nations but also give security sector professionals the opportunity to try and come up with possible solutions.

This workshop will serve as a platform to determine if “reforming” or “transforming” your security sector in your country is necessary, or to share your security sector reform success stories with others.

I don't have to hide from you that there are very concerning trends in this region. Our government in particular is concerned about what is happening in Mali, what is happening in parts of Nigeria. I know that the Senegalese government is concerned as well. The U.S. government will continue to partner with Senegal and with your nations on finding solutions to these challenges, but in the end, it is you who will find the answers. Coming together here this week is a great opportunity to lay that foundation.

After this brief opening ceremony, Special Advisor Theresa Whelan, our National Intelligence Officer for Africa and former a Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for African Affairs will speak to you, and I urge you not only to listen carefully but to give her your feedback and to engage her with questions. This is a unique opportunity to speak to a very high-level defense official, so please take advantage of her time here with you.

It is now my honor to introduce to you the host nation's top official on military affairs - -that is, of course Minister of Defense Augustin Tine. He has been Minister since April, and our Embassy has already appreciated its close working relationship with him. So I thank him for being here with us today, and without further ado, please help me in welcoming him to the podium.